

Last week, as oil reached \$107 a barrel and gasoline prices approached their highest levels since September of 2008, President Obama signaled a shift in his energy strategy, including an apparent willingness to allow more domestic oil and gas drilling.

The president set a goal of cutting America's foreign oil imports by one-third over the next quarter century, as he pledged to find and produce more oil at home and continue his emphasis on development of renewable energy.

While the president's new-found appreciation for more development of domestic oil and gas is welcome, his latest strategy doesn't square with his administration's track record of doing just the opposite.

President Obama made one important point in his energy speech last week: "...there are no quick fixes." However, his administration's policies to date have done nothing to move the process along at a faster pace.

Americans know that tapping our own sources of oil and gas will take time, yet the president has already delayed this process by re-imposing a ban on offshore production that Congress lifted in 2008. He has erased several years of lead time by closing the door to our nation's oil and gas reserves along the Pacific and Atlantic coasts, as well as in the eastern Gulf of Mexico.

He has also shut off access to Alaska's Outer Continental Shelf, opposes development of Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, and stalled development of the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska which could contain up to one billion barrels of oil and 53 trillion cubic feet of natural gas.

Even as his administration, through both moratorium and excessive regulation, has effectively constricted domestic oil and gas development, the president sought to place blame on energy companies for the increase in prices at the pump. He stated, "So any claim that my Administration is responsible for gas prices because we've 'shut down' oil production might make for a useful political sound bite – but it doesn't track with reality."

Those of us along the Gulf Coast know a thing or two about “reality.” We understand the economic importance of oil and gas drilling and certainly feel the impact of excessive regulation and defacto drilling moratoriums through lost local jobs and ever-increasing fuel costs. Despite the economic and job-creating benefits of enhanced development of domestic resources, the administration's current regulations, policies and proposals are hurting jobs, raising energy costs and stunting government revenues.

Dr. Joseph Mason, Professor of Banking at Louisiana State University and Senior Fellow at the prestigious Wharton School, has studied the impact of the Gulf oil drilling moratorium and recently told CNBC that up to 13,000 regional jobs and potentially \$800 million in wages have been lost due to the administration's de facto moratorium.

The chair of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, Rep. Fred Upton, highlighted the president's attempt to shift blame to local energy companies and workers.

“Abandoned rigs sit idle in the Gulf of Mexico and thousands of oil workers are stuck at home waiting for the call to go back to work, yet this administration continues to slow-walk or stall entirely the permits needed to jump-start safe domestic production.”

The president's latest conversion to domestic drilling seems at odds with his recent promises of U.S. support for Brazil's offshore oil drilling efforts. Just last week he said America should also buy more oil and gas from our neighbors. Again, the president needs to explain why beneficial oil trade with Canada – the holder of some of the largest oil reserves in the world - is currently being hindered by bureaucratic red tape?

Why is the administration currently stalling an extension of a major pipeline which could deliver Canadian oil to U.S. refineries? A recent U.S. Department of Energy study said the pipeline has “the potential to very substantially reduce U.S. dependency on non-Canadian foreign oil, including from the Middle East.”

There are no quick fixes. However, we can restore confidence in our economy by removing the administration's bureaucratic roadblocks to domestic energy production.

The issue of American energy independence has been debated for at least 40 years in Washington, yet little progress has been made.

It's time for an "all-of-the above" energy strategy, which opens up the Gulf and other American offshore and land-based oil and gas reserves to safe and responsible drilling. We should also promote the development of domestic natural gas, clean coal, wind, solar, hydropower and geothermal, as well as safe nuclear technology. Let's get to work on these goals.

My staff and I work for you. If we can ever be of service, do not hesitate to call my office toll free at 1-800-288-8721.